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her own sake and good name, let me lay before you one or two examples demonstrating how the disadvantages I refer to, are due entirely to existing laws, and what we would gain by the change in them. A very excellent procedure on the part of the government is now in force, which consists in sending, at stated times, a certain number of midshipmen of the navy to the Smithsonian institution. Here steps are taken to instruct them in marine zoölogy or other matters from which science may be furthered some day, as the opportunities of these young men may afford. Those only are chosen who appear to promise the most, so far as the object in view is concerned. In the long-run, and after all degrees of success of this scheme have revealed themselves, we may obtain, sooner or later, in this way, a man who is really a naturalist in every sense of the word. If I am not mistaken this has already been done, for I have sufficient acquaintance with the young man to say so. He has produced excellent work, published some creditable things, and described several new species. Now no law strictly defines the disposition that shall be made of this one success, in a hundred perhaps, but worse than this, it is more than likely that the operation of the ordinary military impedimenta will defeat, in a very short space of time, what is really a splendid investment on the part of the government. If it falls to his lot to be placed aboard of a man-of-war, under some one who has no appreciation of the importance of such things, and he makes the attempt to utilize his knowledge, it is again more than likely that he will be told that if he wishes to follow such pursuits he had better resign. This proposition is discreditable, I think, any way we look at it, for surely the navy will gain a greater degree of respect for having among their number one who shows ability in any particular line of research, and it certainly seems that the government fails in its duty in not turning such a person to the best account, to say nothing of the interest it would pay her on the original investment.

Precisely the same impedimenta constantly confront the scientific investigator in the army, and my observations upon all that such workers have to contend against in civil life, lead me to believe upon comparison, that they can never entertain any conception of the thousand and one contrivances that surround him, to defeat, and in no way further, his efforts. Not that such persons would object to any thing that the struggle for existence might impose in the natural order of things, when one grows the wiser and the better for the test, but the distractions I refer to, are exceedingly pernicious, and of a far more serious character. Say, however, an ordnance officer wins his reputation as a pathologist, and just such parallel cases have occurred, and always will occur, what happens?—why in some roundabout way we soon find him in the laboratory, but unfortunately with an order over his head directing his return to the arsenal. Now this is bad, for if he goes back to the arsenal the habit of his mind, in spite of his personal integrity, will prevent him from being a good ordnance officer, while on the other hand, the government has abundant need of efficient pathologists, and here is one perhaps whose fame is world-wide. If he be retained in the laboratory the present law demands that he *do good work by stealth*, which is very bad for the investigator, and not a creditable thing for the country, for we should be enabled to do such things entirely above board, and

be able to express our pride in them as a people, without apology, besides.

It would be superfluous in me to attempt to point out the least part of the incalculable benefit that the work of these scientists has been to their country, in the vast majority of instances, nay, to the world at large, and I must believe that the establishment of the scientific corps, that I suggest, would be a step in the right direction.

To say one of the smallest things in its favor, it would obviate the necessity of the recurrence of the ridiculous farce we were, as a nation, unavoidably guilty of, in offering Lieutenant Greely after his arduous expedition, a position in the quartermaster's department,—or such things happening, as occurred only a short time ago, an officer being reported to his department commander, because he was found guilty of pursuing lines of research foreign to his duties, and publishing the results of his investigations, notwithstanding the fact that it was proven that said duties had not been neglected in consequence.

The number of officers composing this corps should be limited to thirty, and transfers to it from other departments or the line, should be made only upon the consent of the officer. Officers should be allowed, however, to apply for such a transfer, and such application should be given due consideration by the National academy of sciences, which constitutes the highest advisory body to the government we have to decide such matters.

If the individual is found worthy of such distinction, and his work passes the required test as now applied by the academy, and he be willing, then the transfer should be effected at the earliest practicable date.

R. W. SHUFELDT.

Fort Wingate, N. Mex., Jan. 25.

### Science and Lord Bacon.

A year ago the honorable Ignatius Donnelly appeared in Washington with a documentary proof that the plays of Shakspeare were written by Lord Bacon. I did not hear Mr. Donnelly's lecture, but several ladies informed me that they believed there was 'something in it.' As 'Bacon's essays' was one of the first books I bought and read, it occurred to me to examine his scientific work; but there is very little, and his single experiment appears to have been the stuffing a fowl with snow, which brought on the chill that caused his death. It seems to me that Bacon's services to science have been greatly overestimated, and that Macaulay's declamation on this point is as absurd as Mr. Basil Montague's arguments to prove that his hero never took bribes. A writer of so much intelligence as Bacon, and yet one who ridiculed the Copernican theory after the discoveries of Galileo, could have had but little scientific spirit; although it is to be remembered that the England of his day was far behind Italy and France in scientific knowledge. Can it be that in this matter we have been imposed on by the fustian of English writers, of cyclopedias and school-books?

ASAPH HALL.

### The competition of convict labor.

In his reply to my criticism of his views on the convict-labor problem, Mr. Butler denies that he consciously stands on the grounds of the ruling order of political economy. He holds that his stand-point is that of 'practical ethics' (*Science*, vii. No. 157).